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Representative Bilirakis' op-ed ("What the Turkish settlement of Varosha would make clear") distorts facts. Apparently, he needs to learn more about the substance of the Cyprus issue.

The matter dates back to the partnership established in 1960 between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots. It was based on the political equality of the two peoples and their joint exercise of sovereignty. The Cyprus issue at hand is a result of the Greek Cypriots hijacking this partnership state back in 1963. With a view to unifying the island with Greece, they practiced armed onslaught against the Turkish community, systematically excluded them from state institutions, and forced the Turkish Cypriots to live in enclaves (corresponding to 3% of the island).

Even in the face of these, unlike what Mr. Bilirakis claims, to this day both Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots tried to contribute to the efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement. The Greek Cypriot's uncompromising attitude on the other hand has not changed ever since. The negotiations for a comprehensive settlement have failed because of their perpetual rejection of sharing power and prosperity.

In order to overcome this impasse, a plan was developed in 2004 by the then SG of the UN, also known as the Annan Plan. It envisaged establishing a partnership of two equal constituent states on the island.

Yet again, it was rejected overwhelmingly by the Greek Cypriots (75.8% voted against it in the referendum), whereas a vast majority of Turkish Cypriots (64.9%) voted in favor. Furthermore, the 2017 Conference on Cyprus in Crans-Montana ended without a settlement because of the same reason. Therefore, if someone is to talk about frustration on the Island, as Representative Bilirakis does, it is only on the part of the Turkish Cypriots.

His reference to the fenced area of Maraş (Varosha) is a deliberate distortion of facts as well. The area is under the full control and jurisdiction of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Citing Turkey on this matter only underscores the

fact that Representative Bilirakis is biased, and totally disregards the Turkish Cypriot sovereignty.

Rather than inhibiting settlement, as Mr. Bilirakis claims, Turkey, as a guarantor state, has always been open and constructive. We do not dictate, nor exclude any settlement model. What is imperative is that the political equality of the Turkish Cypriots is secured and their security needs are met.

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